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A2 Saturday, July 2, 2011

Beach water quality levels online

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People who love to enjoy a leisurely summer day at one of the state's 62 monitored beaches can now check a comprehensive website to make sure the water quality levels are safe.

The Ohio Department of Health announced that people can visit www.odh.ohio.gov/healthybeaches to check if bacteria advisory or harmful algal bloom advisories have been posted at Lake Erie beaches or at an inland lake state park beach.

"People should get the information quicker," Lake County Health Commissioner Frank Kellogg said.

The website was developed with funding from U.S. EPA's BEACHES grant and is a part of ODH's expanded bathing beach monitoring communications efforts.

Earlier this year, ODH started a healthy beaches Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/ohiohealthybeaches and

sponsored a healthy beaches poster contest.

Annually, between Memorial Day and Labor Day, selected public beaches are sampled for E. coli bacteria.

The presence of these bacteria in beach water is a good indicator of pollution that could be potentially harmful to swimmers.

If the sample results are greater than the U.S. EPA recreational standard, an advisory is posted to warn swimmers of the risk of illness associated with water contact.

The advisory remains posted until the sample result is below the recreational standard.

The state of Ohio also does monitoring for harmful algal blooms, which are cyanobacteria (also known as blue green algae).

Once a harmful algal bloom advisory is posted, the state will periodically sample until the toxins produced by the bloom are below acceptable thresholds or the end of the beach season in Ohio.

The Lake County General Health District monitors water quality at Headlands State Park Beach and Lake Metroparks Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Lake County will also sample Ashtabula County beaches. Samples are collected daily (including weekends and holidays) and results are reported 24 hours later, Kellogg said.

They can be viewed at www.lcghd.org/beach.aspx.

Beach water is sampled for E. coli bacteria. When the bacterial count exceeds the single sample standard of 235 E.coli/100 ml sample, advisory signs are posted at the beaches.

In the absence of a warning sign, health officials say to use common sense to evaluate the lake conditions prior to swimming.

It is recommended bathers avoid the water for 24 to 48 hours after a heavy rain of a half-inch or more in a 24-hour period or if the lake appears to be very rough and dirty.

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The Plain Dealer |

PERRY TOWNSHIP

Car-tanker crash kills woman

A 25-year-old Perry Township woman died Thursday morning when her car collided head-on with an empty sewage waste tanker on U.S. 20. Erika Zurinsky was pronounced dead at Madison Medical Center in Madison Township shortly after the 10 a.m. crash, according to a news release from the State Highway Patrol. The tanker truck driver, a 48-year-old Mentor man, was not injured. The crash remains under investigation by the state patrol.